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Before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Monday, March 15, 2010
Testimony of Deborah Chernoff
New England Health Care Employees Union, District 1199, SEIU

In Re: HB 5027, "An Act Concerning the University of Connecticut Health Center's Facilities Plan"

Good morning, Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

My name is Deborah Chernoff and I serve as Communications Director for the New England Health Care Employees Union, District 1199.

As you know, our union represents more than 22,000 health care workers, including 219 who work at the University of Connecticut Health Center.

I am testifying today to offer our support for the University of Connecticut Health Center and the State of Connecticut working together to update UCHC's facilities and build a larger, dynamic Health Network. We are cautiously optimistic about the plan that was presented before the Joint Informational Forum last Thursday.

It is a significant improvement over the previous plans, especially in so far as it puts UCHC at the center of the Network and strives to create health care that is geared toward the needs of Connecticut residents.

We are especially pleased with the promised focus on health disparities. UCHC's unique role as a public health care institution is crucial in the provision of services to African Americans, Latinos, immigrants and the economically disadvantaged. The enhancement

of health services to traditionally underserved communities is a major priority for District 1199 and we are eager to contribute to this process.

We believe that transparency and openness are critical at this stage. Much of what is in this plan reflects the concerns of our membership as stated during the "listening tour." But to the extent that legislators were not made aware of the plan as it took its current shape, the details we are hearing about today become all the more important. We have to get this right for the citizens of our state, the workers at UCHC and the future of health care in Connecticut.

Thank you.